

citizens during thirty years of civil war. He undertook his inquiry after it became clear that the Guatemalan Clarification Commission would not seek to identify those responsible for even the worst atrocities. Bishop Gerardi's investigation, not surprisingly, attributed the overwhelming majority of human rights violations to the military and the death squads and paramilitary groups allied with them.

Mr. President, the United States bears more than a little responsibility for the slaughter in Guatemala that devastated that country in the years after the CIA-backed coup of 1954. Our government trained the Guatemalan armed forces, remained silent when they tortured and killed thousands of innocent people, withheld information about the atrocities, and justified our complicity as the necessary response to a guerrilla insurgency. In fact, during this period of political violence which is apparently not yet over, the principal victims were Guatemala's Mayan population of rural peasants who have been the target of discrimination and injustice for generations.

According to a statement by the Guatemalan Embassy, the Guatemalan Government "condemns and repudiates" this crime and has opened an investigation. Let us hope that this investigation can withstand the inevitable pressure from the forces who would intimidate anyone who seeks real justice in Guatemala. The Arzu Government deserves considerable credit for bringing the peace negotiations to a successful conclusion. But few weeks pass that I do not receive a report of a political crime in Guatemala, most of which go unsolved. Justice remains elusive for those who need it most.

How the Guatemalan government handles this investigation will either embolden or deter those who seek to undermine the peace accords, and, as the Ranking Member of the Foreign Operations Subcommittee I can say that as far as I am concerned it will also be important in determining our future assistance relationship with Guatemala.

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages from the President of the United States were communicated to the Senate by Mr. Williams, one of his secretaries.

EXECUTIVE MESSAGES REFERRED

As in executive session the Presiding Office laid before the Senate message from the President of the United States submitting one treaty and sundry nominations which were referred to Committee on Foreign Relations.

(The nominations received today are printed at the end of the Senate proceedings.)

MESSAGES FROM THE HOUSE

At 3:40 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by

Ms. Goetz, one of its reading clerks, announced that pursuant to the provisions of 22 U.S.C. 276h, the Speaker appoints the following Members of the House to the Mexico-United States Interparliamentary Group: Mr. KOLBE, Chairman and Mr. GILMAN, Vice Chairman.

The message also announced that pursuant to the provision of 22 U.S.C. 276h, the Speaker appoints the following Member of the House to the Canada-United States Interparliamentary Group: Mr. HOUGHTON, Chairman.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

The following bills and joint resolutions were introduced, read the first and second time by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

By Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. CHAFFEE, Mr. LEAHY, Mr. JEFFORDS, Mr. FEINGOLD, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. HARKIN, Ms. SNOWE, Mr. REED, Mr. SANTORUM, Mr. TORRICELLI, Mr. LEVIN, Mr. DASCHLE, and Mr. SPECTER):

S. 1993. A bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to adjust the formula used to determine costs limits for home health agencies under medicare program, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. COATS (for himself, Mr. ABRAHAM, Mr. BROWNBACK, Mr. COVERDELL, and Mr. SANTORUM):

S. 1994. A bill to assist States in providing individuals a credit against State income taxes or a comparable benefit for contributions to charitable organizations working to prevent or reduce poverty and to protect and encourage donations to charitable organizations; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. ABRAHAM (for himself, Mr. BROWNBACK, Mr. COATS, Mr. COVERDELL, Mr. HUTCHINSON, and Mr. SANTORUM):

S. 1995. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow the designation of renewal communities, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. SANTORUM (for himself, Mr. ABRAHAM, Mr. BROWNBACK, Mr. COATS, Mr. COVERDELL, and Mr. HUTCHINSON):

S. 1996. A bill to provide flexibility to certain local educational agencies that develop voluntary public and private parental choice programs under title VI of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965; to the Committee on Labor and Human Resources.

By Ms. MIKULSKI (for herself and Mr. FAIRCLOTH):

S. 1997. A bill to protect the right of a member of a health maintenance organization to receive continuing care at a facility selected by that member; to the Committee on Labor and Human Resources.

By Mr. HATCH (for himself, Mr. BENNETT, and Mr. BINGAMAN):

S. 1998. A bill to authorize an interpretive center and related visitor facilities within the Four Corners Monument Tribal Park, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Indian Affairs.

By Mrs. HUTCHINSON (for herself, Mr. FAIRCLOTH, Mr. ASHCROFT, and Mr. MACK):

S. 1999. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to eliminate the marriage penalty by providing that the income tax rate bracket amounts, and the amount of the

standard deduction, for joint returns shall be twice the amounts applicable to unmarried individuals; to the Committee on Finance.

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. CHAFFEE, Mr. LEAHY, Mr. JEFFORDS, Mr. FEINGOLD, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. HARKIN, Ms. SNOWE, Mr. REED, Mr. SANTORUM, Mr. TORRICELLI, Mr. LEVIN, Mr. DASCHLE, and Mr. SPECTER):

S. 1993. A bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to adjust the formula used to determine costs limits for home health agencies under medicare program, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

THE MEDICARE HOME HEALTH EQUITY ACT OF 1998

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, America's home health agencies provide invaluable services that have enabled a growing number of our most frail and vulnerable senior citizens to avoid hospitals and nursing homes and stay just where they want to be—in their own homes. Today, home health is the fastest growing component of Medicare spending, and the program grew at an astounding average annual rate of more than 25 percent from 1990 to 1997. As a consequence, the number of Medicare home health beneficiaries has more than doubled, and Medicare home health spending has soared from \$2.7 billion in 1989 to \$17.1 billion in 1996.

This rapid growth in home health spending understandably prompted Congress and the Health Care Financing Administration, as part of the Balanced Budget Act of 1997, to initiate changes that were intended to make the program more cost-effective and efficient and protect it from fraud and abuse. However, in trying to get a handle on costs, we in Congress and the administration have unintentionally created problems that may restrict some elderly citizens' access to vitally needed home health care.

Critics have long pointed out that Medicare's cost-based payment method for home health care has inherent incentives for home care agencies to provide more services, which has driven up costs. Therefore, the Balanced Budget Act called for the implementation of a prospective payment system for home care by October 1, 1999. Until then, home health agencies will be paid according to what is known as an Interim Payment System.

Under the new IPS, home health agencies will be paid the lesser of: their actual costs; a per-visit cost limit; or a new blended agency-specific per beneficiary annual limit based 75 percent on an agency's own costs per beneficiary and 25 percent on the average cost per beneficiary for agencies in the same region. These costs are to be calculated from cost reports for reporting periods ending in 1994.

I spent some time going over the formula because it is important to understand what the importance of that very